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ABSTRACT

The Student Athlete Survey was developed and administered to all student athletes at a university during the spring semesters of 1994 and 1995. The survey was designed to: help the athletic department obtain early warning about potential problems; (2) gain insight into the quality of athlete/coach interaction; (3) obtain some global measures of student-athlete satisfaction. The survey was administered during the spring 1994 and 1995 semesters; and the survey procedures were designed to provide respondents with complete anonymity. The range of information addressed by the survey involved the following: global measures of satisfaction with college academic, athletic, and overall experiences; estimates of the number of student athletes who would or would not attend this college again if they were being recruited now; frequency of physical, verbal, and mental abuse by coaching staff; conflict between practice time and cafeteria dining schedule; perceptions of the extent to which athletes are treated fairly by the athletic department; perceived strengths of the coaching staff; and perceived areas in which the coaching staff needs to improve. Survey results provided timely information to enable the athletic director to take corrective actions to improve student-athlete experiences. (SW)

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The Use Of Perceptual Data To Assess Intercollegiate Athletics

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Abstract

In addition to the routine NCAA statistical reporting requirements, Institutional Research offices will be called upon increasingly to provide evaluative information about the campus experience of student athletes. The Student Athlete survey was conducted in 1993 and 1994 and serves as a management tool to help the athletic department (1) obtain early warning about potential problems; (2) gain insight into the quality of athlete/coach interaction; and (3) obtain some global measures of student athlete satisfaction. The results of the study were used in personnel decisions, in identifying problem areas to be addressed, and in improving communications between the athletic director and student athletes. Given the cost of in-depth assessment, perceptual data can provide a useful, though limited, source of information for identifying areas that need improvement or require further review.

for Management Research, Policy Analysis, and Planning

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Jean Endo
Editor
AIR Forum Publications

INTRODUCTION

The reporting of student athlete retention/graduation rates, admission scores, measures of academic performance, and other data as required by the NCAA is a routine institutional research function on most campuses. These external measures are used to provide measures of "quality" to the university community, potential student athletes, and the general public. Mallette and Callahan (1993) have noted that institutional research offices will be called upon increasingly to go beyond routine data reporting and provide evaluative information about the campus experience of student athletes. This survey project was developed for the purpose of providing a number of process measures related to the campus experiences of student athletes. From a TQM perspective, this survey provides a measure of customer satisfaction.

The mandatory NCAA survey of graduating seniors is a similar data collection process to the survey described in this study, but is limited in scope because it does not include underclassmen. This limitation created a need to implement a survey process that was simple to administer and could identify strengths and weaknesses of the athletic program based on the perceptions of student athletes. This type of information can help the the athletic department to (1) obtain early warning about potential problems; (2) gain insight into the quality of athlete/coach interaction; and (3) obtain some global measures of student athlete satisfaction. A brief survey was developed and administered to all student athletes during the spring semesters of 1994 and 1995. The survey will be repeated each year and should be useful in making normative comparisons among teams and years. The survey results have provided a good management tool for identifying and re-inforcing the existence of problem areas and increasing the motivation to act upon known problems.

METHODOLOGY

The survey was administered to all athletes during the spring 1994 and 1995 semesters using a modified Dillman (1978) approach. The survey procedures were designed to provide respondents with complete anonymity. The overall response rate to the survey was 68.3% the first year and 60% the second year. The **Student Athlete** survey is designed to collect the following types of information:

1. Global measures of satisfaction with college *academic*, *athletic*, and *overall* experiences.

2. Estimates of the number of student athletes who would/would not attend this college again if they were being recruited today.

3. Frequency of physical, verbal, and mental abuse by coaching staff.

4. Conflict between practice time and cafeteria dining schedule.

5. Perceptions of the extent to which athletes are treated fairly by Athletic Department.

6. Perceived strengths of coaching staff.

7. Perceived areas in which coaching staff needs to improve.

RESULTS

The survey data are presented in Tables 1-10. Additionally, open-ended comments were typed and presented by sport. The Athletic Director met individually with each coach to review the findings. The findings have proven to be very useful in identifiying coaches who have poor relationships with student athletes. The comments provided concrete examples of coaching behavior that was preceived by athletes to be inappropriate.

Table 1

Survey Response Rate

	N Surveyed		N Responded		% Responded	
	1994	1995	1994	1995	1994	1995
Men's Baseball	26	26	20	12	76.9	46.2
Men's Basketball	16	28	9	15	56.3	53.6
Men's Golf	8	8	5	5	62.5	62.5
Men's Soccer	25	27	12	12	48.0	44.4
Men's Tennis	9	9	7	5	77.8	55.6
Men's Track	15	20	8	12	53.3	60.0
Women's Basketball	14	12	10	7	71.4	58.3
Women's Soccer	20	16	17	14	85.0	87.5
Women's Tennis	7	8	6	5	85.7	62.5
Women's Track	14	14	11	7	78.6	50.0
Women's Volleyball	7	11	3	9	42.9	81.8
No Sport Indicated	0		2		-	
Total All Sports	161	179	110	103	68.3	57.5

Figure 1: Student Athlete Satisfaction With Academic & Athletic Experience

Percent Responding "Good" or "Excellent"

(All Athletes Combined)

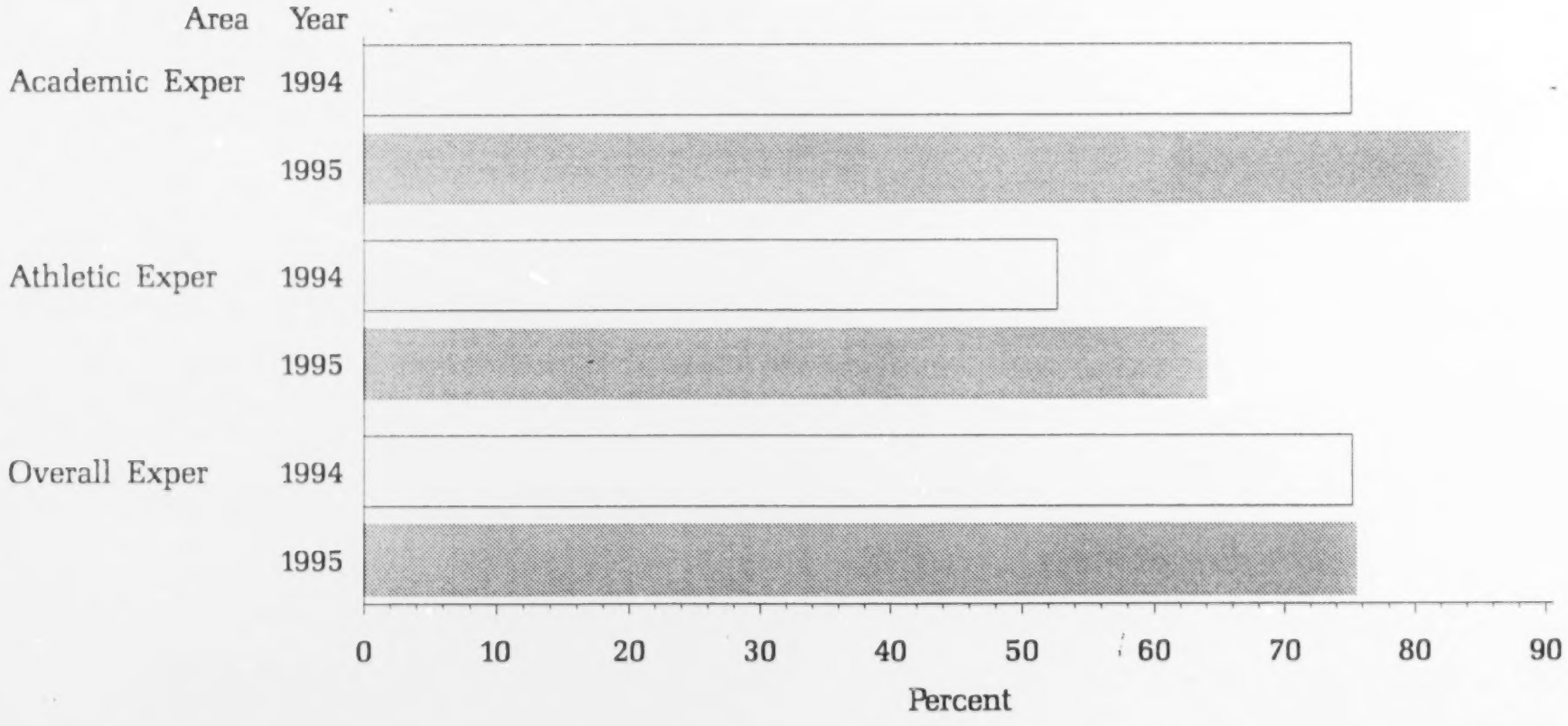

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Table 2

Student Athlete Ratings of Experience at UNCA

(Percent Responding "Good/Excellent")

Sport	Year	Academic	Athletic	Overall
Men's Baseball	1994	75.0	35.0	60.0
	1995	83.3	75.0	75.0
Men's Basketball	1994	66.7	77.8	66.7
	1995	73.3	73.3	73.3
Men's Golf	1994	60.0	60.0	80.0
	1995	100.0	80.0	60.0
Men's Soccer	1994	75.0	50.0	75.0
	1995	75.0	41.7	58.3
Men's Tennis	1994	85.7	42.9	71.4
	1995	80.0	40.0	60.0
Men's Track	1994	75.0	100.0	87.5
	1995	91.7	41.7	66.7
Women's Basketball	1994	60.0	40.0	70.0
	1995	100.0	100.0	100.0
Women's Soccer	1994	88.2	47.1	88.2
	1995	85.7	78.6	85.7
Women's Tennis	1994	66.7	0.0	83.3
	1995	100.0	80.0	80.0
Women's Track	1994	63.6	72.7	63.6
	1995	71.4	57.1	71.4
Women's Volleyball	1994	100.0	100.0	100.0
	1995	77.8	44.4	88.9
Total Men	1994	73.8	55.7	70.5
	1995	82.0	59.0	67.2
Total Women	1994	74.5	48.9	78.7
	1995	85.7	71.4	85.7
Total By Year	1994	74.5	52.7	74.5
	1995	83.5	64.1	74.8
Total All Years		78.9	58.2	74.6

Table 3

During this Year, Have You Been Subject to Coaching Techniques that Involved Abuse?

(Percent Responding "Never")

Sport	Year	Physical	Verbal	Mental
Men's Baseball	1994	100.0	65.0	50.0
	1995	91.7	58.3	91.7
Men's Basketball	1994	88.9	77.8	88.9
	1995	93.3	73.3	80.0
Men's Golf	1994	100.0	100.0	100.0
	1995	100.0	100.0	100.0
Men's Soccer	1994	100.0	75.0	83.3
	1995	100.0	100.0	83.3
Men's Tennis	1994	85.7	85.7	71.4
	1995	100.0	100.0	100.0
Men's Track	1994	100.0	100.0	100.0
	1995	91.7	58.3	50.0
Women's Basketball	1994	90.0	50.0	40.0
	1995	100.0	100.0	100.0
Women's Soccer	1994	94.1	11.8	29.4
	1995	100.0	92.9	85.7
Women's Tennis	1994	100.0	66.7	50.0
	1995	100.0	80.0	100.0
Women's Track	1994	100.0	100.0	81.8
	1995	100.0	71.4	71.4
Women's Volleyball	1994	100.0	33.3	33.3
	1995	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total Men	1994	96.7	78.7	75.4
	1995	95.1	77.0	80.3
Total Women	1994	95.7	48.9	46.8
	1995	100.0	90.5	90.5
Total By Year	1994	96.4	65.5	62.7
	1995	97.1	82.5	84.5
Total All Years		96.7	73.7	73.2

Table 4

Were Practice Times Usually Scheduled in a Manner that Allowed you to Eat In the Cafeteria?

		Yes		No		n/a	
Sport	Year	N	%	N	%	N	%
Men's Baseball	1994	15	78.9	3	15.8	1	5.3
	1995	10	83.3	1	8.3	1	8.3
Men's Basketball	1994	8	88.9	1	11.1	0	0.0
	1995	11	73.3	4	26.7	0	0.0
Men's Golf	1994	2	40.0	1	20.0	2	40.0
	1995	3	60.0	0	0.0	2	40.0
Men's Soccer	1994	11	91.7	0	0.0	1	8.3
	1995	11	91.7	0	0.0	1	8.3
Men's Tennis	1994	6	85.7	1	14.3	0	0.0
	1995	5	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Men's Track	1994	8	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
	1995	11	91.7	1	8.3	0	0.0
Women's Basketball	1994	3	30.0	7	70.0	0	0.0
	1995	6	85.7	1	14.3	0	0.0
Women's Soccer	1994	0	0.0	16	94.1	1	5.9
	1995	12	85.7	0	0.0	2	14.3
Women's Tennis	1994	3	50.0	0	0.0	3	50.0
	1995	3	60.0	1	20.0	1	20.0
Women's Track	1994	9	81.8	0	0.0	2	18.2
	1995	7	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Women's Volleyball	1994	2	66.7	1	33.3	0	0.0
	1995	9	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total Men	1994	50	83.3	6	10.0	4	6.7
	1995	51	83.6	6	9.8	4	6.6
Total Women	1994	17	36.2	24	51.1	6	12.8
	1995	37	88.1	2	4.8	3	7.1
Total By Year	1994	69	63.3	30	27.5	10	9.2
	1995	88	85.4	8	7.8	7	6.8
Total All Years		157	74.1	38	17.9	17	8.0

Table 5

Do You Believe that the UNCA Athletic Department Treats Athletes Fairly?

		Yes		No	
Sport	Year	N	%	N	%
Men's Baseball	1994	9	45.0	11	55.0
	1995	10	83.3	2	16.7
Men's Basketball	1994	8	88.9	1	11.1
	1995	11	73.3	4	26.7
Men's Golf	1994	3	60.0	2	40.0
	1995	3	60.0	2	40.0
Men's Soccer	1994	10	83.3	2	16.7
	1995	8	66.7	4	33.3
Men's Tennis	1994	5	71.4	2	28.6
	1995	4	80.0	1	20.0
Men's Track	1994	8	100.0	0	0.0
	1995	9	75.0	3	25.0
Women's Basketball	1994	6	60.0	4	40.0
	1995	1	16.7	5	83.3
Women's Soccer	1994	4	23.5	13	76.5
	1995	7	50.0	7	50.0
Women's Tennis	1994	2	33.3	4	66.7
	1995	3	60.0	2	40.0
Women's Track	1994	8	72.7	3	27.3
	1995	5	71.4	2	28.6
Women's Volleyball	1994	2	66.7	1	33.3
	1995	6	66.7	3	33.3
Total Men	1994	43	70.5	18	29.5
	1995	45	73.8	16	26.2
Total Women	1994	22	46.8	25	53.2
	1995	22	53.7	19	46.3
Total By Year	1994	66	60.0	44	40.0
	1995	67	65.7	35	34.3
Total All Years		133	62.7	79	37.3

Table 6

If You Were Being Recruited Today, Would You Choose UNCA Again?

		Yes		No	
Sport	Year	N	%	N	%
Men's Baseball	1994	8	40.0	12	60.0
	1995	9	75.0	3	25.0
Men's Basketball	1994	4	50.0	4	50.0
	1995	9	64.3	5	35.7
Men's Golf	1994	4	80.0	1	20.0
	1995	3	60.0	2	40.0
Men's Soccer	1994	10	83.3	2	16.7
	1995	7	63.6	4	36.4
Men's Tennis	1994	6	85.7	1	14.3
	1995	2	40.0	3	60.0
Men's Track	1994	7	87.5	1	12.5
	1995	4	36.4	7	63.6
Women's Basketball	1994	7	70.0	3	30.0
	1995	7	100.0	0	0.0
Women's Soccer	1994	13	76.5	4	23.5
	1995	9	75.0	3	25.0
Women's Tennis	1994	2	33.3	4	66.7
	1995	4	80.0	1	20.0
Women's Track	1994	8	72.7	3	27.3
	1995	5	71.4	2	28.6
Women's Volleyball	1994	2	66.7	1	33.3
	1995	6	75.0	2	25.0
Total Men	1994	39	65.0	21	35.0
	1995	34	58.6	24	41.4
Total Women	1994	32	68.1	15	31.9
	1995	31	79.5	8	20.5
Total By Year	1994	71	65.1	38	34.9
	1995	65	67.0	32	33.0
Total All Years		136	66.0	70	34.0

DISCUSSION

The use of perceptual data to assess intercollegiate athletics is similar to the process described by Gravely & Cochran (1991) in their work on assessing university non-academic units. Survey-generated perception data can provide a relatively inexpensive and timely assessment of college programs and services. Most universities do not have the resources to perform in-depth, substantive program assessments. While customer perceptions may not always provide a complete picture of reality, they can provide useful assessment information. The use of perceptual data for athletic assessments is analogous to the use of student ratings of faculty teaching performance. In either case, student perceptions or measures of satisfaction are useful as a tool for identifying problem areas, but not in making distinctions among the competent (Cochran and Gravely, 1987).

The survey results had an immediate impact in the athletic program. Shortly after the survey results were disseminated in the first year, four coaching personnel changes were made. While the existence of problems was known prior to the survey, these data played an important role in providing empirically-based summary information supplemented with written comments. In some cases, the written comments revealed patterns of coaching behavior that were not consistent with the values and goals of the institution. The survey results brought to light a number of perceived problems related to funding and equity among sports that demand improved communications between athletic administrators, faculty athletic representatives, coaches, and student athletes. In other cases, the written comments provided oblique clues to several problem areas. For example, student complaints about the quality of meals while traveling to athletic events were linked to the inappropriate use of athletic department funds by a member of the coaching staff.

As part of the survey debriefing process, coaches were asked to comment on the value of the Student Athlete survey. A number of coaches thought the survey provided an unnecessary forum for disgruntled student-athletes since the intense and frequent student-athlete/coach interactions can lead to some conflict. This type of survey does not provide coaches with much new information, but rather provides the athletic director and college administrators with a global assessment of student-athlete satisfaction. The survey results provided timely information to enable the athletic director to take corrective actions to improve student-athlete experiences. The senior exit interviews mandated by the NCAA do not allow for timely intervention and are limited to those athletes who persevere to graduation.

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